

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 11896

LONDON PLEASE PASS AMB. CHAMBERS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN GOVERNMENT CRISIS, HOW REAL?

REF: BRUSSELS 11855

1. FOLLOWING THE JUNE 15 SUBMISSION BY PRIME MINISTER
TINDEMANS OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S RESIGNATION (REFTEL),
THE KING BEGAN CONSULTATIONS WITH PARTY PRESIDENTS.
CONSULTATIONS ARE CONTINUING TODAY (JUNE 16), WITH A
ROYAL DECISION ON ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF TINDEMAN'S
RESIGNATION NOT EXPECTED BEFORE JUNE 19.

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2. FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (CVP) PRESIDENT WILFRIED
MARTENS, ONE OF THE PRESIDENTS CONSULTED BY THE KING,
HAS TOLD REPORTERS THAT HIS PARTY STILL HAS FULL
CONFIDENCE IN TINDEMANS, AND IS COUNTING ON HIM TO
SEE THE COUNTRY THROUGH THE PRESENT CRISIS. SPOKESMEN
FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY MEANWHILE HAVE REAFFIRMED

THEIR PARTY'S READINESS TO ABIDE BY THE PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH LAUNCHED TINDMANS II. AND VOLKSUNIE PRESIDENT SCHILTZ CONTINUES TO REGARD THE PRESENT STANDOFF AS "REPAIRABLE". IN SHORT, REAFFIRMATION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PRESENT MAJORITY IS NOT TO BE EXCLUDED AT THIS STAGE. IN FACT, IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE COALITION, THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME.

3. BASED ON THE FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION AVAILABLE REGARDING THE SEQUENCE OF PROPOSALS AND COUNTERPROPOSALS LEADING TO THE IMPASSE, IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT TINDEMANS' "RESIGNATION" WAS PRIMARILY CALCULATED TO PRESSURE THE SOCIALISTS INTO GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON THE QUESTION OF BUDGET CUTS. FALL OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WOULD SCRAP THE EGMONT-STUYVENBERG REGIONALIZATION ACCORD SO DEAR TO THE HEART OF THE MORE RADICAL WALLOON SOCIALISTS AND OF THEIR FDF ALLIES. IF THIS IS, IN FACT, TINDEMANS' PLOY, THE ROYAL HOUSE WILL HAVE TO TAKE CARE THAT IT NOT BE SEEN TO BE A PARTY TO IT.

4. THERE HAS BEEN SOME SPECULATION THAT THE CURRENT CRISIS COULD END WITH A CABINET RESHUFFLE INVOLVING TINDEMANS' DEPARTURE (HIS FATIGUE, FRUSTRATIONS, AND INTEREST IN CONCENTRATING ON EUROPEAN-LEVEL POLITICAL

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ACTIVITIES BEING CITED AS FACTORS). BASED ON OUR CONVERSATION WITH HIS CHEF DE CABINET (REFTEL) AND ON MARTENS' POINTED ENDORSEMENT, WE FEEL THAT, AT LEAST FOR NOW, TINDEMANS IS STILL VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN REMAINING AS PRIME MINISTER. DE TARR

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